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ABSTRACT

On May 7, 1997, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted a Universal Service Order outlining a plan to guarantee that all eligible schools, libraries, and rural health care providers have affordable connections to the Internet. By making $2.5 billion available annually, this program will provide discounts (commonly known as the E-rate) to eligible organizations on certain telecommunications services. This ERIC Digest lists resources containing background information, instructions, application forms, help lines and other useful information (resources and addresses are subject to change) related to the E-rate. Resources are listed under the following headings: Web Sites; FCC Sites; Department of Education Sites; Other E-Rate Sites; and Listserv Discussion Groups. (Author/AEF)

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E-rate: A Resource Guide for Educators
ERIC Digest
June 1998

By:

David Fulton

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E-rate: A Resource Guide for Educators

by David Fulton

On May 7, 1997, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted a Universal Service Order outlining a plan to guarantee that all eligible schools, libraries and rural health care providers have affordable connections to the Internet. By making $2.5 billion available annually, this program will provide discounts (commonly known as the E-rate) to eligible organizations on certain telecommunications services. The plan also creates a $400 million fund to lower the prices rural health care providers pay for telecommunications services.

This digest lists resources containing background information, instructions, application forms, help lines and other useful information related to the E-rate. Readers should be aware that the resources and their Internet addresses below, while correct at printing, are subject to change.

Web Sites

The Schools and Libraries Corporation (SLC)
SLC is the independent not-for-profit corporation established to administer the E-rate. Schools and libraries can file their applications electronically from the SLC Web site. Those who choose to file manually are welcome to mail their applications to Schools and Libraries Corp., PO Box 4217, Iowa City, IA 52244-4217. All schools and libraries who file applications for the program will have the technology services they requested posted on the Web site in order to invite competitive bidding from vendors. The Web site operates every day from 5:00 a.m. to midnight Eastern Time and includes FAQ's, a discount matrix, and fund status. In the Service Provider area, vendors can search the posted applications, and users can directly download a report of the highlights of services that were requested on Forms 470 and subsequently posted on the Web site for competitive bidding.
E-mail questions to: <question@slcfund.org> or call 888-203-8100.
➺ http://www.slcfund.org

National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA)
The FCC appointed NECA as temporary administrator of the support mechanisms which will fund the Universal Service programs. This site provides information on Service Provider Identification Numbers (SPIN), consortia, eligible services, rules of priority, pre-existing contracts, disbursement of funds, instructions for completing the online forms and an overview of the E-rate program. The site also links to the Rural Health Care Corporation (RHCC), which administers the rural health care aspects of the E-rate.
➺ http://www.neca.org

FCC Sites

For the latest official government information, FCC orders are available electronically from the FCC Universal Service Home Page.
➺ http://www.fcc.gov/ccb/universal_service/

FCC FAQ
Services and Functionalities Eligible for Discounts.
➺ http://www.fcc.gov/Bureaus/Common_Carrier/Public_Notices/1997/da971374.html#2

FCC LearnNet
The FCC's Informal Education Page dealing with FCC policy and education initiatives. Contains press releases, FCC Orders, recent E-rate public notices, and FAQ's. Use the FCC's fax-on-demand system to obtain a document which contains information similar to that on the LearnNet page. Call 202-418-2830 and follow the directions to request that document #8844 be automatically faxed to the number you provide.
➺ http://www.fcc.gov/learnnet/

Department of Education Sites

E-Rate Forms
In addition to the two forms (Form FCC 470 and 471), you will find instructions for completing them and an overview of the Universal Service program. The overview provides information on: kinds of schools and libraries that are eligible, consortia (which are also eligible), calculating the discount, classifying urban and rural locations, eligible services, examples of eligible and ineligible internal connections, rules of priority, pre-existing contracts, what schools and libraries must do before applying, the application process, and Web sites to go to for more information.
➺ http://www.ed.gov/Technology/erateforms/

Nine Steps You Can Take Now to Prepare for the Schools and Libraries Universal Service Program
➺ http://www.ed.gov/Technology/ninestep.html

Questions and Answers on Implementation of the Universal Service Program for Schools and Libraries
➺ http://www.ed.gov/Technology/qanda.html

Other E-Rate Sites

National Center for Education Statistics School (NCES) Codes
The E-rate application forms require the district or school NCES (National Center for Educational Statistics) code. This site will help you find those codes.
➺ http://nces.ed.gov/ccdweb/school/school.htm

Consortium for School Networking
CoSN, a non-profit organization, promotes the use of telecommunications in K-12 education to improve learning. This site contains recent SLC Fact Sheets, E-Rate forms, and links to state education departments.
➺ http://www.cosn.org/

The Benton Foundation's Universal Service and Universal Access Virtual Library
The Benton Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, private foundation which seeks to promote communications in the public interest. The Universal Service and Universal Access Virtual Library includes research, history, policy briefings and bulletins.
➺ http://www.benton.org/Policy/Uniserv/

EdLiNC: Education and Library Networks Coalition
EdLiNC was formed to represent the viewpoint of schools and libraries in FCC proceedings dealing with the implementation of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. The EdLiNC Web site includes the latest updates, free publications, action kits, and links to other Universal Service Sites. One of EdLiNC's projects is the E-Rate Hotline, which includes a toll free number for questions: 1-800-733-6860 (10 a.m.-9 p.m. EST), a Web site <http://www.eratehotline.org> which contains a searchable knowledge base of questions, and an online form to send your questions to an e-rate expert.
➺ http://www.itc.org/edlinc/discounts/

Quality Education Data Information on Universal Service Fund
Quality Education Data (QED) is a research and database company, focused exclusively on education. This site provides information on the application process, eligibility, funding, restrictions and program implementation.
➺ http://www.qeddata.com/usfund.htm

3Com "Everything you always wanted to know about the E-rate, but were afraid to ask."
This workbook, produced in cooperation with the Consortium for School Networking, includes a disk with SLC forms, a list of state education departments, a guide to creating a technology plan, and an example of a technology plan.
➺ http://www.3com.com/erate

"The E-rate and Beyond," A Special Report from T.H.E. (Technological Horizons in Education) Journal
This online journal provides links to breaking news, case histories, technology backgrounders, links to technology plans, and more.
➺ http://www.thejournal.com/erate/default.asp

American Library Association Office for Information Technology Policy
This site is directed toward public libraries, and includes links to telecommunication legislation, regulations, policies and state programs.
➺ http://ala.org/oitp/univserv.html

Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL)
McREL operates several regional centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education that provide research, technical assis tance, professional development, evaluation and policy studies, and information services to several state and local education agencies. This extensive site includes news, general information and resources, and state and local initiatives.
➺ http://www.mcrel.org/connect/tech/telecom.html

Merit
Merit is a nonprofit membership organization that provides Internet services and expertise to Michigan's educational community, libraries, governments, communities and businesses. A timeline shows the important dates and deadlines for the universal service program. This site also contains a list of services and facilities that are eligible and ineligible for USF discounts, an SLC Fact Sheet on Discount Calculations, examples and suggestions for calculating the discount as well as updates and K-12 and library resources.
➺ http://www.merit.edu/

On-line Seminar: Universal Service/Network Democracy
This site contains information and activities relating to Information Renaissance's Universal Service/Network Democracy online seminar. The seminar is an attempt to involve local teachers and librarians in the implementation process of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and, specifically, in the development of rules regarding the Act's new Universal Service provisions for schools and libraries.
➺ http://info-ren.pitt.edu/universal-service/

Listserv Discussion Groups

FCCsend
A one-way (non-interactive) listserv set up to send you e-mail on the FCC's latest updates and suggestions for preparing your school or library to get the most out of communications technology. To subscribe, address an e-mail message in the following manner:
➺ To: subscribe@info.fcc.gov
sub FCCsend firstname lastname

FCCshare
An interactive listserv through which you can communicate with other students, teachers, librarians, administrators, and parents who are using or preparing to use technology. To subscribe, address an e-mail message in the following manner:
➺ To: subscribe@info.fcc.gov
sub FCCshare firstname lastname

edtech
A one-way (non-interactive) listserv set up to send you the text (via e-mail) of Universal Service-related speeches given by FCC Commissioners. To subscribe, address an e-mail message in the following manner:
➺ To: subscribe@info.fcc.gov.
subscribe edtech firstame lastname

COSNDISC On-Line Discussion Forum
This on-line discussion forum is open to everyone on the Internet. It serves as a meeting place for everyone interested in school networking and helps coordinate policy and projects nationwide.
➺ To subscribe to COSNDISC send e-mail to: listproc@cosn.org
In the body of the message include the single line,
"Subscribe cosndisc, your first name, your last name"

MINWG-share
The Michigan Information Network Working Group (MINWG) mailing list answers questions you may have about the Universal Service Fund. All questions are answered by a panel of representatives in the Michigan education and library community.
To subscribe to the MINWG-share mailing list, address an e-mail message to:
➺ Majordomo@merit.edu. Then write
SUBSCRIBE MINWG-share
in the message.
List Archive:
http://www.merit.edu/mail.archives/html/minwg-share/

This Digest was prepared by David Fulton, AskERIC Network Information Specialist.

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